

WEBB CU

What we propose to do in the next hour is to grapple with some historical perspectives of the American dramatic art during the last 45 years. What our stage is today continues to reflect the great upsurge of American drama that began with the Great Depression years of the 1930's. During the following sixty minutes, I and my guests will explore the relationship of this dramatic period of criticism and conformity to current theater as well as try to peer into the future and see where these roots may be leading us.

To accomplish this, we are focusing our detailed attention on the contribution of Theater...primarily local theater and the Federal Theater Project of the mid-thirties...to the movement of drama during this era.

And now, let's meet the exploring party.

GROUP SHOT & MAYBE CU'S OF GUEST EITHER ZOOM OR PAN

Two guests who have had a life-long involvement with theater are Mrs. Dortha Lynch and Mr. Wilbur Dorsette. Mrs. Lynch is well known for her work as a director of the Annie Russell Theater, and was involved during the Thirties in the government supported Florida State Theater. Also remembered as a major directoral influence on the Annie Russell Theater is Mr. Wilbur Dorsette, whose experience with the Federal Theater Project on the state level came in North Carolina. Our search for major influence on drama cannot overlook the impact that mass media made, and we will be talking particularly about radio drama with Mr. ^{HAL KENT PD WDBO} ~~Glenn Lewis~~. You'll be meeting these people shortly, and getting to know better their joie de vivre of the days when America made her plunge into the Age of the Future.

RETURN TO VARIOUS SHOTS OF WEBB & ANY PERTINENT VISUALS

Not all of us lived during the Thirties, and our perceptions are colored by either fading memories or exaggerated accounts through books and films. Certainly, as the Roaring Twenties plunged over the cliff of its excess, and hard times came with the sudden rush of a tidal wave, the Thirties became a raw existence. There was great struggle, great hardships to overcome, and for the first time in its brawling history, America had to depend upon its government to care for its people. That sort of change was resisted at first. President Herbert Hoover kept calling for a display of rugged individualism that would get everyone over the starvation, emotional depression, and great fear that millions shared about their future.

Not only did American government become much more involved with social programs during the Thirties, but America drama also decided to take its head out of the past and begin to delve into the social fabric of modern life. There was great political upheaval in the arts as the expatriate writers of the 20's returned from Paris to lead the radical movements that earned the Thirties the name of "The Red Decade." Yet, the communistic surge of this period was not so much the agitation of professional organizers and sympathizers as it was the desperate need of the mass public to find new comfort that would relieve the debilitating effect of being out of work when his Puritan/Protestant ethic told him he ought to be at work.

The drive toward increased social comment had sound roots. As early as the turn of the century, there had been the Yellow Journalism of ~~Sinclair~~ Lewis to lead the way. And the Twenties produced Hemmingway, Faulkner, Dos Passos. The Thirties brought Thomas Wolfe and John Steinbeck. The American theater was perhaps the weakest literary form of expression. It's first giant, Eugene O'Neill, was only beginning to write his most serious, most radical drama. Perhaps the public, grown accustomed to "The Emperor Jones" and "The Great God Brown" wasn't quite ready for "Mourning Becomes Electra" or "The Iceman Cometh." Yet, there they were, filled with raw, new social comment. It wasn't until 1936 that O'Neill was to become comfortable enough to be awarded the Nobel Prize.

The period brought out strong new voices that were to radicalize the American stage as never before. Maxwell Anderson, Clifford Odets, and Thornton Wilder dominated the ~~stage~~ dramatic arts with their ragged cries for a new social order, their harsh sketches of a failed civilization.

It was not until 1939 and the outbreak of war in Europe that the ~~xxx~~ radical movement in drama was to be replaced by a surge of writing that conformed to the prosperous new war economy, the burgeoning good times of the forties. And as society became comfortable again, at least for the masses, drama too became comfortable, conservative, traditional, and reverent to artistic form and restraint.

Despite the respite that victory in World War Two gave, the seeds of dramatic discontent had been sown, and playwrights throughout the next four decades were to follow in those cornrows, harvesting the wealth of subject matter, realistic characterizations, humanized plots that had been left by O'Neill, Odets and Wilder. America drama, whatever the date since 1929, has been marked by the struggle of man to turn away from the conquest of his land and turn toward the mastery of his destiny on Planet Earth.